

Local Government Survey

Virginia Department of Alcoholic Beverage Control

May 2004

Who did we survey?

There were a total of 955 surveys distributed to local government professionals consisting of Mayors, City Managers, Chairs of the Town Council, County Administrators, Chairs of the Board of Supervisors, Economic Development Directors, Planning Directors, Zoning Administrators, and Community Development Directors. Using the *Virginia Review Directory of State and Local Government Officials*, surveys were mailed in April with a follow up thank you/reminder postcard sent 6 days following the initial survey.

Responses were received from 368 individuals for a response rate of 39%. The largest response categories were from City Managers (21%) and Mayors (18%). Respondents provided various additional comments, which can be found on the last pages of this report.

The survey assessed the following:

- Attitudes towards the location of current ABC retail stores.
- Knowledge of any potentially underserved areas.
- The type and frequency of contact local government professionals have with ABC.
- Attitudes relating to the severity of underage purchases of alcohol/tobacco.
- Awareness of and participation in the ABC licensing process.
- Overall satisfaction of services provided by ABC.

Survey Highlights:

Public Safety – Control

- With regards to alcohol, 59% of the respondents indicated what ABC is doing to stop the sale of alcohol to those under 21 is “about right”.
- With regards to tobacco, 47% of the respondents indicated what ABC is doing to stop the sale of tobacco to those under 18 is “about right”.
- Although most of the respondents were aware of various opportunities for locality input into the ABC licensing process 71% had never provided input. Of those who did, they were frequently satisfied with the different services. The group that was the most aware was City Managers.

Customer Service/Satisfaction

- Six in ten of the respondents were satisfied (63%) and only 8% were dissatisfied regarding the location of ABC stores in their locality.
- Six in ten of the respondents indicated they were satisfied (66%) and only 4% dissatisfied with the level of oversight given to businesses selling alcohol in their locality.
- A total of 98% responded that they were satisfied (71%) or “neutral” (27%) with services provided by ABC.
- An overwhelming 87% agreed that the distribution of profits and taxes from ABC stores is important to their locality. According to respondents, 8% of localities designate the money for a particular budget category or purpose.
- The respondents typically do not have contact with ABC (69% indicated no contact). When they do, the top two reasons related to either ABC licensees or ABC licensing applications.
- Only 9% of those surveyed have never used the ABC website. Of those who did, the number one reason was for agency contact information.

Revenue - Store Locations

- According to survey responses, the top three contacts to make when planning a new store location or relocation were the Zoning Department, Planning Department and the City Manager/County Administrator.

What we do well:

- The respondents indicated high levels of satisfaction in regards to store location, level of oversight given to businesses selling alcohol, and general satisfaction with ABC.
- Awareness of the opportunity for input into the ABC licensing process was high. For those who participated in the process, satisfaction levels were also high.
- Those surveyed felt ABC was taking an appropriate amount of action towards the prevention of underage alcohol and tobacco use.

Opportunities for improvement:

- Levels of contact with ABC were very low. Based on qualitative data in the comments section, those surveyed desire to be contacted especially in regards to new stores or relocations.
- Only 9% of respondents have used the ABC website. Efforts should be made to increase the usage of the ABC website and provide appropriate services.
- There were several comments regarding the need for ABC to be sensitive to the location of both stores and licensees in relation to schools/churches/etc. The Department should continue its efforts in meeting this desire through policies such as the Store Decision Approval Policy.

**Survey Responses:
Local Government Survey
N = 368**

Note: Counts do not always equal 368 due to multiple selection options and omitted answers. Percentages are calculated from the number that responded to each question.

How much is the use of tobacco products by those under 18 years old a problem in your community?

	Percent
A Big Problem	12%
A Moderate Problem	47%
A Small Problem	19%
None at All	1%
Don't Know	21%

Do you think what ABC is doing in Virginia to stop the sale of tobacco to those under 18 is:

	Percent
Too Much	1%
Too Little	21%
About Right	47%
Don't Know	31%

How much is underage drinking of alcoholic beverages a problem in your community?

	Percent
A Big Problem	7%
A Moderate Problem	43.5%
A Small Problem	27%
None at All	2.5%
Don't Know	20%

Do you think what ABC is doing in Virginia to stop the sale of alcohol to minors is:

	Percent
Too Much	<1%
Too Little	14%
About Right	59%
Don't Know	27%

Are you aware of the following opportunities for locality input into the ABC licensing process?

	Count (Yes)	Percent
Publication of a notice of application twice in the local paper	262	78%
Posting of a notice of application on the door of the establishment	258	78%
Notification to Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs	216	65%
Administrative Hearings that allow community input regarding license applications	207	63%

Have you ever provided input into the ABC licensing process?

	Percent
Yes*	23%
No	71%
Don't Know	6%

*** Of the 81 survey respondents who had provided input into the licensing process, they evaluated the following services in this manner:**

N = 81	Very Satisfied	Generally Satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Posting of a notice of application on the door of the establishment	36%	39%	19%	3%	3%
Publication of a notice of application in the local paper	35%	40%	23%	1%	1%
Notification to Chiefs of Police and Sheriffs	39%	35%	21%	3%	2%
Administrative hearings regarding license applications	32%	30%	29%	5%	4%

Overall, how satisfied are you with the location of ABC stores in your locality?

	Percent
Very Satisfied	25%
Generally Satisfied	38%
Neutral	29%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	5%
Very Dissatisfied	3%

Overall, are you satisfied with the level of oversight given to businesses selling alcohol in your locality?

	Percent
Very Satisfied	9%
Generally Satisfied	57%
Neutral	30%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	4%
Very Dissatisfied	<1%

Rate your overall satisfaction with services provided by ABC.

	Percentage
Very Satisfied	16%
Generally Satisfied	55%
Neutral	27%
Somewhat Dissatisfied	2%
Very Dissatisfied	<1%

The distribution of profits and taxes from ABC stores is important to my locality.

	Percentage
Strongly Agree	52%
Agree	35%
Neutral	12%
Disagree	1%
Strongly Disagree	<1%

Is the money received from ABC taxes and profits designated for any particular budget category or purpose?

	Percentage
Yes*	8%
No	65%
Don't Know	27%

*** If yes, what budget category?**

General Street O+M, Operation Expenses, Law Enforcement, General Services, General Operating, Schools, Police Department, Education, General Account Revenue, Regular operation, General Fund, Expenses of Town, and Used to pay expenses to keep R/E rate down.

How frequently does your office/department have contact with ABC, either through phone contact, personal contact, or e-mail?

	Percent
Weekly	4%
Monthly	7%
Quarterly	6%
Semi-Annually	6%
Annually	9%
No Contact	69%

*** Of the 111 survey respondents who had contact with ABC, the following reasons were given for contact(s):**

N = 111	Count (Yes)
ABC licensing application related	55
ABC licensee related	45
Illegal alcohol activity	37
ABC store related	28
Other (See Below)	15

Other includes: Checking in, Zoning/State Code Issues, Task Force, Payment, Just good communications, Buying, Existing Business Program, Dance Hall Permits, Enforcement Agents, Complaining Business, Review of Premises and Routing Patrol.

Have you ever used the ABC website (www.abc.state.va.us)?

	Percent
Yes*	9%
No	91%

*** Of the 33 survey respondents who had used the ABC website, the following reasons were given for use:**

N = 33	Count
Agency contact information	27
Store locations or relocations	16
Licensee Search	12
Education information on responsible selling and serving	10
Tools to prevent underage sales	5

If ABC is planning a new store location or relocation, whom in your locality should ABC contact?

	Count (Yes)
City Manager/County Administrator	187
Zoning Department	187
Planning Department	156
Chief of Police	79
Economic Development Department	74
Chair of the Town Council/Chair of the Board of Supervisors	70
Sheriff	43
Other (See Below)	29

Other includes: Clerk/Treasurer, City Attorney's Office, Building Code, Building Official, Building Inspector, Treasurer Department, Town Manager, Town Administrator, Town Superintendent, Commissioner of the Revenue, Community Development, Mayor, School Superintendent, Utilities, and Housing and Neighborhood Services.

Within your locality, are there any areas that are in need of an additional ABC store to cover service voids?

	Percent
Yes	16%
No	56%
Don't Know	28%

What is your title/position?

	Count	Percentage
City/County/Town Manager (includes Assistant/Deputy)	75	23%
Mayor	60	18%
County Administrator	43	13%
Planning Department Professional	38	11.5%
Zoning Administrator	36	11%
Economic Development Director	30	9%
Chair of the Board of Supervisors	15	4.5%
Law Enforcement Professional	12	4%
Clerk	8	2%
Other (See Below)	6	2%
Community Development Director	4	1%
City/Public Safety Attorney	3	1%

Other includes: Administration Officer, Executive Assistant, Program Manager, Director of Community Services, Neighborhood Enhancement Coordinator, Public Affairs Coordinator.

Comments:

Regarding store locations or relocations, do you have any comments/ideas about communication between ABC and your locality?

General Communication

- Communications between ABC and Police Department are well established.
- Very good communication with the police department.
- It is extremely important. Not every area needs ABC facilities.
- I think there should be communication between Town and County and ABC Board.
- have no communication
- Comment from local governing body should be solicited.
- Hold a public forum prior to opening a new store.
- Public should be made aware.
- ABC should notify locality about locations it is considering.
- Greater frequency of communication would be good.
- Good communication preferable
- There is no communication between ABC and Smyth County because there isn't an ABC store in the unincorporated area of Smyth County.
- Never had any contact
- Things are fine.
- Excellent
- It is GREAT locally - Store Manager and Economic Development Director have relationship in existing business program.
- As mentioned above, 3 of these offices are staffed by myself. Communication is relatively easy in Berryville!
- We have heard ABC may move, but have received no official communication.
- The communication has been one sided: ABC asked for our opinion on store location then relocated anyways, moving the store out of downtown.
- The way you have done locations or relocations in the past has worked fine for us.
- Current approach is good
- Needs to be more communication. The city was not happy that an ABC store was located in the resort area where we are trying to create a family atmosphere.
- Our experience with ABC is they will listen to our wants then discard them.
- ABC rep to appear before Board as needed or, at minimum, annual report.

Early/Timely Communication

- It would be helpful to receive semi-annual status updates and if we are affected early correspondence.
- The sooner the better, preferably before a lease or purchase of property is made by ABC.
- Maintain "open" and "frequent" communiqués.
- The earlier the better, we are better able to help if we are involved early.
- Early!
- Prior communication (at planning stage, not implementation) is paramount/critical.
- Provide more timely information to City contacts
- Early written notification to those listed above should be sufficient to keep lines of communication open.
- Early contact is very important.
- We would appreciate as much notice as possible to allow us input, as well as our citizens. However, we anticipate no problems related to this.
- Contact with Planning Department should be made as quickly as possible.
- Before any action is taken the town should be notified.

Methods of Communication

- Office visits are best.
- Just telephone to get the ball rolling.
- I prefer e-mail communication.
- Phone calls or correspondence by mail.
- Just call us

Regarding store locations or relocations, do you have any comments/ideas about communication between ABC and your locality? (Continued)

Who to Contact

- Contact locality before you make a decision on site location.
- Please contact Town Manager.
- Please keep Mayor and Town Manager advised of plans.
- Initially contact County Administrator
- Communication should be directed to the City Manager's Office. He can then involve other staff/council as necessary.
- Contact the above Departments in advance of locating a store.
- Best to set up an appointment with the zoning officer and to have a specific location in mind.
- Recommended that you schedule a preliminary meeting with the Director of Planning and Community Development.
- Please contact the zoning/planning office to determine the zoning is appropriate and the store is a permitted area.
- The planning department would be able to provide the necessary input to ABC.
- Economic Development office can assist with site locations.
- Communication of Town Manager/Office of Mayor should suffice.
- The Board or Supervisor from the District being considered should be contacted.
- Town Manager
- Yes-Contact zoning and mayor's office
- When planning contact and coordinate ideas with our planning staff
- Contact departments listed above.
- Contact local government offices above at the beginning of the process.
- If store is to be located in town, contact Town Manager/Mayor. If store is to be located in county, contact County Administrator/Planner.
- Deal directly with Town Manager, Mayor, and Town Council

Communication Desired

- We would like to know if the ABC store is going to be relocated.
- We would appreciate being advised of any potential locations or relocations.
- Would like to be notified
- To advise city of your plans prior to opening another store.
- As long as local government is informed about relocations.
- Keep us informed!
- We would like to be in on the planning stages.
- Please stay in touch with local police chiefs.
- Any contact would be nice.

Zoning/Comprehensive Plan

- Have only talked to ABC reps one time. It was within the last couple of years and regarded the potential of locating one or more new stores in the County. As we conveyed then, such locations need to be consistent with the County's Comprehensive Plan. Planning desires to be contacted regarding locations/relocations.
- Have not had contact with ABC before. No ABC location in town - if one were to locate in town, would need to address zoning and other issues.
- Communication/conformance with zoning regulations
- Integrate with the Comprehensive Plan and Zoning Map.
- Needs to meet master plan on local communities and economic development.
- You may want to ensure proposed location is in a commercial district.
- Need to confirm zoning district

Regarding store locations or relocations, do you have any comments/ideas about communication between ABC and your locality? (Continued)

Stores

- The county prefers to have stores located near existing towns and villages.
- No store located in our town, but one to north and south of us about 5-7 miles either way.
- I would like to see a store placed in the town.
- Both locations are fine. Please do NOT close either one.
- Moving the stores out of downtowns is both poor business and an apparent violation of state policy.
- Do not have dealings with the existing ABC store. Located in the permitted GB district.
- We want an ABC store.
- We only have one ABC store and it should be located in a more centralized location.
- We need an ABC store back in the county seat.
- Yes, I believe the downtown business district should retain an ABC store.
- ABC store was removed from the town of Haysi, there years ago. ABC profits have dropped since this happened.
- We want to retain our store
- ABC has been very good to work with. Looking forward to new location.
- No store in my town

Other

- Town would be glad to have you back.
- No bottled liquor sales should be sold from convenience stores in the Town. The Town Manager should be notified before approval of any ABC license in the corporate limits of the Town.
- Social Impact Study
- Would want the supervisor of the district it is to be located in to be made aware and suggest prospective location.
- I think standards should be stricter. City attorney did not back us up when we thought an ABC license should not have been given to an establishment near a school.
- No ABC
- Importance regarding the distance between such stores and schools.
- Yes, this type of facility should not be located close to churches, schools, hospitals, or nursing homes, nor day care centers.
- There needs to be a sensitivity by ABC to where their locations are relative to preschools, elementary schools, and other sensitive land uses.
- Downtown could use the business and consumer traffic generated by the ABC store.
- Yes, would like stores located to be easily observed by local law enforcement.
- We enjoy a good productive and proactive relationship with our ABC agent. We work collaboratively on many projects.
- Well run

Do you have any additional comments or concerns not addressed in this survey?

Store Locations

- We would like to keep the ABC store. There is a possibility that a private prison will be coming within a year's time.
- Again, we do not want a relocation of the existing store outside of town.
- Security of store locations.
- ABC store closed in 2003
- ABC store just recently opened. Welcome!
- Current location serves the public well and helps other merchants and business around it. 130th compliment each other very well.
- Current facilities are located west of I-95. Due to increased traffic congestion, there is a need to locate facilities east of I-95.
- Concerned about relocation of our existing store.

- I really wouldn't mind entertaining the suggestion of a small moderately sized ABC store in this town!
- I believe we need an ABC store here because of all the travel outside of county to buy liquor.
- ABC store should be returned to town
- Please don't let a possible nearby store affect ours!
- I would like to know the guidelines of an ABC store and churches and schools.
- County wants to host a store and we have been in contact with your staff regarding this matter.
- Town has no bars or liquor stores

Do you have any additional comments or concerns not addressed in this survey? (Continued)

Agents

- Need more enforcement agents.
- Local agent is extremely helpful to County, especially with special events permits and research/data.
- Thank you for assigning an Agent to our area. This is an invaluable resource.

Privatization

- Sale of Alcohol should be privatized to allow competition. Additional stores could then be opened.
- Virginia should get out of the alcoholic beverage selling business-Privatization would provide for local business opportunity.
- continue to lobby the IGA.
- I believe you should be privatized. The state beyond tax collection and enforcement of the law has no business in the liquor business. Free enterprise and competition with the state collecting the revenue and capitalism prevailing. I will

Gratitude

- Thank you! (4)
- Local store manager and local agent are great to work with!
- Thanks for the opportunity to give input.
- This office has been very satisfied with the working relationship we have with ABC.
- ABC has been a valuable partner in our community policing efforts. We look forward to working with our liaison for many more years to come.
- Thanks for your good work.
- Kristy Taylor in the Hampton office is extremely helpful!

Licensees/Licenses/Licensing Process

- Not being notified or asked for input on issuance of licenses. Not being advised of special licenses, who, where, when - No idea who is agent for area - No POC
- I believe ABC should have strict standards and not allow sales near schools. Also, should shut down places that are public nuisances.
- Police Department has too much say in whether a restaurant gets an alcohol license. Should be more balanced.
- Administrative hearings should be at local Courthouse.
- There should be attention given to localities' need to have conditions placed on licensees to prevent social and public safety problems.

Other

- Have studies been done relative to open sale of alcohol in liquor stores? This would seem to be a way to reduce state employment and boost retail sales and probably tax receipts. You would lose some control but drinkers will drink.
- We will work with whomever is involved.
- I suggest you also send this to the Police Chief, as he may be able to respond to questions better than I.
- A lot of these questions are not applicable to my department's operation. I have not sought input from other departments that might have more knowledge under the assumption they were provided this survey separately.
- This is a coordinated response from the City. Please send a copy of survey results to the City Manager's office. Thank you.
- How does ABC control Internet sales of Alcohol?
- It would be helpful if you could provide some clarification to 4.1-126 (v) particularly the meaning of the words "developed by"
- We do not have ABC (period).
- Businesses constantly complain about ABC, in Richmond especially. They ask why we can't be more like Memphis, TN or other cities.